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GOVERNOR


STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN
SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

September 13, 2011

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents and
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Mike Flanagan, Superintendent of Public Instruction 

SUBJECT: Community Eligibility Option (CEO) Application Deadline

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has received over 40 applications for the Community Eligibility Option (CEO). However, the application deadline is **Thursday, September 15, 2011**. It would be great to add significantly more to that number.

From the number of phone calls we have received, it is apparent there is quite a bit of interest in this new approach to qualifying students for free school meal benefits. We are looking forward to receiving applications from more districts. If there is anything we can do to help you with your decision, please let us know. In the meantime here are some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) with answers:

- Q. Is it too late to apply for Community Eligibility?
- A. No, due to the short time frame we were given by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), we are allowing applications up to **September 15, 2011**.
- Q. We have already sent out and begun to collect free and reduced applications. Does that mean we are not eligible to apply?
- A. You are still eligible to apply. We knew when USDA contacted us, and eventually selected us as a pilot state, that many schools would have already sent out their free and reduced applications. This is why we have an extended deadline of **September 15**.

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- Q. How will participation in the CEO affect funding sources such as Title I and 31a money?
- A. For the funding issues related to free and reduced applications, parents must complete the "Household Information Survey." Schools must enter appropriate information in the Supplemental Nutrition Eligibility characteristic in the Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) on the October 5th count date. These counts also drive subgroup identification for all federal reporting and Section 31a funding. The total of Title I money is based on census data, not free and reduced counts.
- Q. If I use the information on the LEARS report for my application, do I include the numbers for identified students reported in Field 4-2 or just 4-1?
- A. You can only count the number reported in 4-1 (plus runaway, migrant, homeless, and foster children if not already included in 4-1). In addition, food or cash assistance eligibility based on free and reduced applications do NOT count toward direct certification numbers.
- Q. If I choose not to use LEARS data, what should I use?
- A. Use whatever direct certification lists you have available that will give you the most accurate count of students enrolled in your school as of April 1 and directly certified as of April 1. If you are using the MSDS as your source, you would use the Spring General Collection for your enrollment count and the direct certification report. Please note exited students and students reported in multiple buildings will need to be filtered from the report to give you an accurate count. If you believe that there are students who were newly enrolled in the spring and were certified, you can verify certification via the MSDS Student Search on a student-by-student basis.
- Q. If we are planning to apply but haven't completed the process, how should we count school meals until a decision is made?
- A. We strongly suggest you continue to count meals by category with the best available information you have (last year's applications and new applications received this year). If you are approved for CEO, you will apply the claiming percentages to all meals for the entire month. However, if for some reason you are not approved, you will need accurate meal counts to claim for September. The sooner you apply and are approved, the less of a problem this could be.

While we are excited about this opportunity, we know there will be many questions as it is put into place. Thank you for your interest in this wonderful opportunity. Please contact School Nutrition Programs at mde-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov or (517) 373-3347 if you have further questions.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance